

It Could Be Worse

By Jake Schneider, Assistant Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

Sometimes, I wonder if some of the great philosophers were responsible for maintaining golf courses during summers like we've had over the past two years. Because personally, there's something about chasing wilting Poa in 90+ degree heat during July and August afternoons that makes me question the meaning of life. Given my own deep contemplating in such situations, I can only imagine what Aristotle and Nietzsche would have come up with if they would've dealt with a Pythium outbreak or bacterial wilt. But, even though it was another extreme summer, it could've been worse.

This spring, many along the Mississippi and Missouri River watersheds dealt with flooding that seemed to drag on for months. The winterkill that we faced at Blackhawk seems like small apples when compared to the courses that either washed away or drowned when the banks overflowed. To compound the problems, many of these same areas had to deal with an extraordinary amount of tornadoes during the spring and early summer.

It almost seems criminal to complain about the heat when Oklahoma and Texas dealt with record-breaking heat and drought while we almost reached the century

mark on the thermometer. The resulting wildfires have certainly been salt on the wounds of our southern counterparts. Sure, it was hot for Wisconsin, but it wasn't that hot.

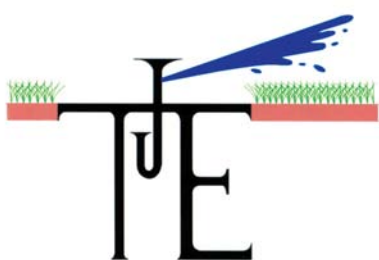
Most recently, the majority of the eastern seaboard was pummeled by the rains and winds of Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. The resulting scenes seemed like something out of Hollywood, and there's no doubt that the superintendents that had to deal with it felt the same.

So, while we most definitely had to deal with our fair share of issues in Wisconsin, there are many around the nation who would've gladly traded summers with us. Alas, as I write this article in the second week of September, fairway aerification is literally right around the corner, and it's beginning to feel a bit like fall. We've survived another summer, and I still don't know that the meaning of life is. However, that doesn't necessarily mean that I'm pining to handwater fairways any more than necessary to figure it out.

As a side note, one thing that I have figured out is that Wisconsin has lost a phenomenal professor as Dr. John Stier has taken on a new role with the University of Tennessee. John, I'm amazed by the wealth of information that my notebooks contain from the turf classes that you taught. At the time, there's no doubt that it didn't fully appreciate what you were trying to pound into my young mind. Additionally, the graduate-school opportunity that you gave me was not only tremendously rewarding, but I also like to think that it made me a much more well-rounded individual.

Dr. Stier's commitment to his students and to groundbreaking research was truly outstanding. Throughout his time in at Wisconsin, he was on the forefront of the environmental movement that's occurring in our industry, and I expect that much of his research will become even more pertinent in the coming years.

With that, I hope that everyone has a good, relaxing remainder of the fall and that you're as glad to see the summer as 2011 in the rear-view mirror as I am.



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